

VZCZCXRO3405  
OO RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHTI #0271 1201415  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 301415Z APR 09  
FM AMEMBASSY TIRANA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8082  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE IMMEDIATE 2483  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE 3558

C O N F I D E N T I A L TIRANA 000271

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/SCE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/28/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [SMIG](#) [GR](#) [AL](#)  
SUBJECT: GREECE TAKES THE COAST

REF: A) 2008 TIRANA 745 B) 2008 TIRANA 806

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF PAUL POLETES FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d).

11. (C) On April 27-28, Greek PM Kostas Karamanlis visited Albania, the first such visit by a Greek PM since 1992. A 2005 visit by Greek President Karolos Papoulias was cut short when Papoulias left the country without meeting with his GOA counterpart due to protests. But now a new day has dawned. Both the Greek Embassy in Tirana and the MFA characterized the current bilateral relationship as the best it has been since relations were initiated in 1973. Greek DCM Alexios Zannos said that the signing of the agreement on the border of the sea shelf between the two countries was the main outcome of the visit. Zannos seemed quite pleased with this agreement, although the media has been attacking the GOA for giving away too much to the Greeks. The area in question is a strategic area and also has the potential for tourism and oil is thought to lie beneath the surface (ref A). Some observers have suggested that this concession was made by the GOA in return for the Greek ratification of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) and support for NATO accession. Zannos also said the two sides briefly discussed Audrey Glover's selection to head the ODIHR monitoring mission (septel).

12. (C) According to Zannos, PM Karamanlis met alone with PM Berisha for 30 minutes with no one else present in the room. Zannos speculated that the two PMs discussed politics and the upcoming elections, although Zannos admitted he was not privy to details. Karamanlis also met with President Topi, Mayor Rama, Archbishop Anastasios, Speaker Topalli and addressed Parliament. Reading from his telegram to Athens, Zannos said that Karamanlis discussed visa liberalization, protecting the rights of the Greek minority in Albania as well as Albanians living in Greece, and economic development. The Cham minority group was not mentioned at all during the visit, outraging Cham groups, the media, and some political leaders including Erion Veliaj of G-99 (Note: The Chams are ethnic Albanians who were expelled from Greece after World War II. See ref B.) According to Tahir Muhedini, a Cham leader, the Greeks asked before the visit that this issue would not be raised and the GOA agreed. Ilir Tepelena, Director of Regional Affairs at the MFA, did not necessarily dispute this notion, saying only that discussions centered on a "wider perspective" concerning the protection of the rights of all Albanians in Greece. Finally, and for good measure, Zannos said that PM Berisha pledged to fight corruption and organized crime.

13. (C) Comment: Combining the maritime agreement with the previous agreement on cemeteries for Greek soldiers killed in Albania in World War II, as well as Greece's ratification of the SAA and Albania's entry into NATO, it seems that the major outstanding bilateral issues have been resolved. However, while the GOA and the Greeks seem pleased, many Albanians are not, judging by the reaction of the media and

some political leaders. The agreement on the sea shelf boundaries has provoked a storm of controversy about the motives of this decision and how Albania gave in to all the Greek demands. The Greeks also got off easily on the sensitive Cham issue. The GOA appears unwilling to pursue this issue since an estimated 600,000 Albanians work there and Greece is Albania's second largest trading partner. All in all, it seems to have been a good visit for Greece.

WITHERS